

Claude Opus 4.6

April 26, 2026

[Fourteenth Century ACA Transcriptions and Translations/](#)

Claude finished the response

You said: I have a document in Catalan from 1387, written in fourteenth century Gothic Secretarial hand.

I have a document in Catalan from 1387, written in fourteenth century Gothic Secretarial hand. Please do your best to transcribe for Stage 1.

4:02 PM

Claude responded: This is a fascinating document — a health bulletin from Queen Violant de Bar reporting on a life-threatening illness of Joan I, including his receiving of comm...

Deciphered medieval Catalan manuscript through meticulous paleographic analysis

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This is a fascinating document — a health bulletin from Queen Violant de Bar reporting on a life-threatening illness of Joan I, including his receiving of communion when death seemed imminent, and his subsequent recovery. It's written in Catalan, from Reg. 2037 (Violant's registers), f. 17v, and clearly begins mid-sentence, continuing from the recto.

Here is my Stage 1 transcription:

Stage 1: Initial Transcription

Source: ACA, Cancillería, Reg. 2037, f. 17v **Document type:** *Lletra closa* / royal health bulletin **Sender:** Queen Violant de Bar **Recipients:** Uncertain from this folio (likely city officials or representatives at the Corts) **Language:** Catalan **Date:** Tuesday, [?] April 1387, Barcelona

Note: The text begins mid-sentence, continuing from the recto.

...deles gubernacio general e comissio contengudes en les dites letres no ses als trobat sino ço · qui fa saber per sa letra lo dit senyor / quan daco e deles altres coses tocades en vres letres escu [?] al papa segono [?] vosaltres hauets fet saber · Quant es daco que desus vos · que an nos faça res quin pogues tornar en lesio alguna / o torb dels Capitols que en hauets portats / hajats per ferm que nos fara / Com en aquello lo senyor Rey e nos stam e entenam eer [?] constants sens tota variacio ¶ Ja saprets [?] que dimenge prop passat apres vespres vench al senyor Rey / fort gran ardent de sincopi [?] / per lo qual perde la paraula / e li refredoren [?] fortment les extremitats / e vench en article de mort e tro a lhora de miga nuyt estech fortment abatut / mas ladonchs o aço alcu [?] poch per gracia de nostre senyor deu pres millorament / en lo qual perla [?] tro lendema coes yr [?] que fo diluns apres mig jorn · ¶ Et en aquella hora vench li altre fort ardent per lo qual se agreuga [?] entant que tot hom cuydava departir [?] dela sua [?] vida / n eri [?] de oppinio que yr o en la nuyt que passada ell degues finar sos dies / de que tots los dela Cort e dela Ciutat foren grancment [?] torbats / mostrants be lur naturalesa e grand affeccio e singularment ne commoguem [?] nos en turbacio e tribulacio transcendent / com ne haguessem e hajam [?] singulars raons · ¶ Et ladonchs lo dit senyor molt plenament e devota combrega / e reebe lo cors de Jhesuchrist · orac [?] apres obrant la gracia divinal / ala qualesa [?] e es tot me [?] retors lo dit senyor pres gran millorament / lo qual de hora en hora per la gracia de aquell [?] e entat continuar / que ell era ara molt be / beneyt ne sia nostre senyor / en lo quel esperam que dins breu lo restituira en plena sanitat / e reprim [?] los conservara [?] longament ¶ Et notificam vos açò per tal quin façats la ciutat / e que del bon millorament del senyor Rey hajats plaer e consolacio / en retats laors e graces ala sancta trinitat facent-li oracio espanyal [?] per la salut del dit senyor · Et que tro an hauets entres [?] dels / gentment als affers per e mes per que sots aquin / davinavit [?] hi entenets ab diligencia prelativa · donant-vos hi tots ab tot esforç de guisa que breu hagen la conclusio que desjam · Et abs [?] nos moguesses dals que res que espesses [?] del esperanter [?] ala persona del senyor Rey ne per altres coses / tro que los dits affers hajen deguda fi / com sien tals en que va molt al senyor Rey e a nos / e a tota la tla [?] / e que ell e nos ques seguet [?] com al nostre cor fort impreses · Dada en Barcelona sots nostre segell secret dimarts a · xxxx [?] · d'abril · del any · m · ccc · lxxxvij · Get [?] ·

Paleographic and Interpretive Notes:

1. "**sincopi**" [?] (l. 8): The initial letter could be *f* or long *s*; I read *sincopi* (syncope/fainting) on medical-contextual grounds — the king loses speech and his extremities grow cold. "Fricopi" is paleographically possible but lexically opaque.

2. **"perde la paraula"**: Fairly confident reading. The loss of speech followed by cold extremities and coming *en article de mort* is a classic deathbed symptom sequence.
3. **"perla" [?]** (after "millorament"): Unclear verb — possibly a contracted form of *perdurà* (persisted) or simply *per la [gràcia de Déu]*, though that phrase was just used. The passage means the improvement continued until the following day.
4. **"coes yr"**: I read *ço és ahir* — "that is, yesterday" — establishing the letter's chronology: illness began Sunday evening, midnight improvement, relapse Monday, letter written Tuesday.
5. **"commoguem" [?]**: Very uncertain. I read a form of *commoure* (to move/disturb) — "we were singularly moved into turmoil and tribulation" — but the letter forms are difficult. Other possibilities include *conjunguem* or *consumem*.
6. **"e hajam"**: I tentatively split what might also be read as a single garbled word *alhajam*, parsing instead as *e hajam* — "as we had, and have, singular reasons [for such emotion]."
7. **"orac" [?]**: Immediately after the communion passage. Possibly *e açò* (and this), or *orat* — the sense is "and then, after, the divine grace working.."
8. **"qualesa" [?]**: Difficult reading after *gràcia divinal*. Possibly *qual ço és* (which that is) or a garbled form. The passage describes the king's great improvement following communion, attributed to divine grace.
9. **"reprit... conservar" [?]**: Both verbs uncertain. The sense is clearly that God will restore the king to full health and preserve him long. *Reprit* might relate to *reprendre* (resume); the second verb could be *conservarà* or *conjuarà* [?].
10. **"espanyal" [?]**: After *oració*. Possibly *especial* (special) or *espiritual* (spiritual). Standard formulae would have *oració e pregària*.
11. **"tla" [?]**: Near the end — "a tota la tla" — probably an abbreviation for *terra* (the land/realm). Could also be *llla* (island, i.e. Mallorca?) but *terra* seems far more likely in context.
12. **Date numeral**: The strokes before *d'abril* are difficult to resolve. They appear as several vertical or crossed strokes — possibly *iiii* (4th), *xxx* (30th), or another numeral. The filename suggests April 30 may be relevant, but I cannot confirm from the manuscript alone. The day is *dimarts* (Tuesday).

13. **"Get"**: Final word, likely a scribal or secretarial notation — possibly the registering clerk's abbreviation.

14. **Document context**: This is clearly addressed to someone overseeing *Capitols* (chapters/articles, probably Corts business) and managing *affers* (affairs) on behalf of the crown. The queen reassures the recipients that the king's illness should not disrupt their work, urges them to continue with diligence, and asks them to give thanks for the king's recovery.

You said: Here is the output from the other HTR for Stage 2: de les jnhibicion general e commissio contengudes en les dites letres no pes als trobat sino que ço que fa s...

Here is the output from the other HTR for Stage 2: de les jnhibicion general e commissio contengudes en les dites letres no pes als trobat sino que ço que fa saber per sa letra lo dit senyor / qui daço e dales altres coses tocades en vostres letres queu al present poguesse vosaltres hauets fet saber. Quant es daço que desus dehets que an nos fassa res qui pogues tornar en lesio alguna o torb dels capitols que en hauets portats / hajats per ffi que nos ffarem / Com en aquells lo senyor Rey e nos siam e estiam certs constants sens tota variacio. [Item] sapials que diumenge prop passat apres vespre vench al senyor Rey fort gran accident de sincopi / per lo qual perdet la paraula e li refredaren fortment les extremitats / e vench en article de mort a tal hora de mija nuyt estach fortment abatus / mas ladonchs o aço algun poch per gracia de nostre senyor Deu pres millorament / en lo qual pprosseda tot lendema que fo fo diluns apres mig jorn. E en aquella hora vench li altre fort accident per lo qual se aguera entes que tot hom romas quasi desesperat de sa vida / e cert d'oppinio que ja o en la nuyt prop passada ell degues finir sos dies / de que tots los de la Cort / e de la Ciutat foren greument torbats / mostrants be lur naturalesa e puresa affeccio / e singularment ne haguem nos en turbacio e tribulacio transcendent / com ne haguessem e hajam singulars raons. Et ladonchs lo dit senyor molt solemnement e devota combrega / e rebe lo cors de Jhesu Xpist. Mas apres obrant la gracia divinal / a la qual era e es tot merit recorregue lo dit senyor tan gran millorament / lo qual de hora en hora per ara e encara continuat que ell esta ara molt be / beneit ne sia nostre senyor / en lo qual esperam que dins breu lo veurem en plena sanitat / e veurem lo y conservar longament. E notificam vos aquest ffet per tal que sapials la veritat / e que del bon millorament del senyor Rey hajats plaer e consolacio / en retents laors e gracies a la sua majestat ffahents hi oracions especials per la salut del dit senyor. Et si tro aci hauets entes dili- gentment als afers seys e nucs per que sots aqui / daciavant hi entendereu ab diligencia puixlatina. Donants nos hi tots ab tot esforç de guisa que breu hagen la conclusio que desijam. Et abans nos moguessets daqi per res que oïssis del estament de la persona del senyor Rey ne per altres coses / tro que los dits afers hajen deguda fi car puix talment que va molt al senyor Rey e a

nos / e a tota la terra / e que ell nos proseguex tost al nostre cor fort jmmpreso. Dada en Barchelona sots nostre segell secret a XXX d'abril. Al any M. CCC. LXXX set.

Show more

4:10 PM

Claude responded: Thank you.

Systematically reconciled manuscript transcriptions against HTR output, adjudicating divergences through paleographic analysis

Systematically reconciled manuscript transcriptions against HTR output, adjudicating divergences through paleographic analysis

Thank you. Let me work through the reconciliation systematically, returning to the manuscript image to adjudicate each divergence.

Stage 2: Reconciliation

(a) Where HTR corrects Claude

1. **"inhibició" not "gubernació"** — HTR reads *jnhibicion general e comissió*, which is the standard paired chancery formula (a general inhibition prohibiting interference, paired with a commission). Claude's *gubernació* was a misread. HTR is clearly right.
2. **"que ço que fa saber... qui d'açò"** — HTR's syntactic parsing is superior: *sinó que ço que fa saber per sa letra lo dit senyor, qui d'açò e de les altres coses tocades en vostres letres...* The relative *qui* refers back to *lo dit senyor*, not to *ço*. Claude's *quan d'açò* was a misread.
3. **"dehets"** — HTR supplies *dehets* (you say, 2nd pl. present of *dir*) after *desús*, which Claude missed entirely. *Quant és d'açò que desús dehets* — "As for what you say above" — is grammatically necessary.
4. **"qui" not "quin"** — Before *pogués tornar en lesió alguna*. Simple relative pronoun; Claude's *quin* was erroneous.
5. **"accident de síncopi"** — HTR reads *accident* (medical episode/attack) both here and in the second fever passage. Claude read *ardent* (burning). *Accident de síncopi* is standard medieval medical terminology — a sudden attack of syncope. HTR is clearly right in both occurrences.

6. **"en aquells"** — HTR's *en aquells* (in those [Capitols]) is grammatically better than Claude's *en aquello*. The pronoun refers to the plural *Capítols*.
7. **"sapiats"** — HTR reads *sapials* (i.e. *sapiats*, imperative/subjunctive of *saber*). Claude's *saprets* (future indicative) is possible but less formulaic. Returning to the ms, I think the letter forms favor *sapiats*. The opening word remains uncertain — HTR brackets [*Item*], Claude read *Ja*. I tentatively read *Ja sapiats* from the ms but this needs verification.
8. **"prossedà/procedà tot l'endemà que fo diluns"** — HTR's reading, while itself somewhat garbled (*fo fo* is a clear duplication error), gives a verb *prossedà* (proceeded/continued) that is more coherent than Claude's uncertain *perla*. Crucially, HTR reads *tot l'endemà* (all the next day) where Claude had *tro l'endemà* (until the next day). The sense: the improvement continued all the next day (Monday). HTR also lacks Claude's *ço és yr* (that is, yesterday) — returning to the ms, I believe Claude interpolated this from ambiguous letter forms. HTR's simpler reading is preferred, minus the *fo fo* duplication.
9. **"romàs quasi desesperat de sa vida"** — HTR reads *tot hom romàs quasi desesperat de sa vida* (everyone remained nearly despairing of his life). Claude read *cuydava departir de la sua vida* (expected to depart from this life). Returning to the ms, the word after *tot hom* begins with what appears to be *r*, and *quasi* is visible. HTR is right.
10. **"e cert d'opinió"** — Where Claude had garbled *n eri*, HTR reads *e cert d'opinió* (and certain of the opinion). This parses cleanly and matches the ms. HTR correct.
11. **"ja o en la nuyt prop passada"** — HTR's *ja* (already/imminently) and *prop passada* (just past) are both more standard than Claude's *yr* (yesterday) and *que passada*. HTR preferred.
12. **"solemment"** — HTR reads *solemment e devota combregar* (solemnly and devoutly received communion). Claude read *plenament*. Returning to the ms, the initial letter has an ascender consistent with long *s*, and *solemment* is the more liturgically precise term. HTR preferred.
13. **"Mas après"** — Where Claude had the uncertain *oraç*, HTR reads *Mas* (But). *Mas après, obrant la gràcia divinal* — "But afterwards, the divine grace working" — is a natural adversative transition. HTR clearly right.

14. **"a la qual era e és tot mèrit, recorregué lo dit senyor [a] tan gran millorament"** — HTR resolves Claude's garbled *qualesa... retors* into a coherent theological statement: the divine grace *to which was and is all merit*, followed by the king's recovery (*recorregué* = recovered/had recourse to) with *such great improvement*. HTR substantially correct here.
15. **"per ara e encara continuat"** — HTR's reading (for now and still continued) replaces Claude's uncertain *per la gràcia d'Aquell e entant continuar*. The sense: the improvement has continued and is still continuing. HTR preferred.
16. **"aquest fet per tal que sapiats la veritat"** — HTR reads *notificam-vos aquest fet per tal que sapiats la veritat* (we notify you of this event so that you may know the truth). Claude's *per tal qu'in façats la ciutat* was a misread. HTR is clearly right — this is standard notification formula.
17. **"oracions especials"** — HTR's *oracions especials* (special prayers) replaces Claude's uncertain *oració espanyal*. Standard pious formula. HTR right.
18. **"Et abans no-s moguessets d'aquí per res que oíssets del estament de la persona del senyor Rey"** — This is the single most significant HTR correction. Claude's reading was badly garbled. HTR gives: "And [that] you should not depart from there for anything you might hear about the condition of the lord King's person" — using *estament* (state/condition), *oíssets* (you might hear, from *oïr*), and *abans... moguessets d'aquí* (before you should leave from there). This makes perfect political sense: the queen is ordering the recipients to stay put and continue the Corts business regardless of alarming health reports.
19. **"a tota la terra"** — HTR's *terra* (land/realm) replaces Claude's uncertain *tla*. Contextually obvious.
20. **"XXX d'abril"** — HTR reads the date numeral as XXX (30th). Claude was uncertain but suggested similar strokes. April 30 is consistent with the document's internal chronology and with the filename.
21. **"M CCC LXXX set"** — Both readings agree on 1387. HTR writes out *set* (seven) where Claude read *vij*. The ms likely has the numeral.

(b) Where Claude is preferred

1. **"no-s és als trobat"** — Claude's reading parses as *no s'és als trobat sinó* (nothing else has been found except). HTR's *no pes als trobat* does not parse. Claude preferred.
2. **"s'agreujà entant que"** — Claude's verb *s'agreujà* (was aggravated/worsened) and construction *entant que* (so much that) are both superior to HTR's garbled *se aguera entes que*. Claude preferred for the verb; HTR for the rest of the clause (see above *re romàs quasi desesperat*).
3. **"com sien tals en que va molt"** — Claude's reading (*as they are such that much depends on them*) is grammatically clean. HTR's *car puix talment que va molt* does not parse well. Claude preferred, though the initial conjunction (*com* vs *car*) needs verification.

(c) Where both are uncertain or require archival verification

1. **"vostres letres [?] al [?] [?] vosaltres havets fet saber"** — This is the single most important unresolved crux. Claude read *escriu al papa segons*; HTR read *que-u al present poguésse*. Neither parses perfectly. If Claude is right, the king is writing to the pope about matters the recipients have raised — contextually plausible given Joan I's Avignon diplomacy. If HTR is right, the syntax is strained. Both need archival verification.
2. **"hajats per ferm/fi que nós farem / no-s farà"** — Claude read *per ferm que no-s farà* (hold as firm that it will not be done); HTR read *per fi que nós ffarem* (hold as final that we will do [it]). Both are defensible. The key question is the verb ending: *farà* (3rd sg.) vs *ffarem* (1st pl.). HTR's positive statement (*we will uphold them*) perhaps fits the reassuring tone better, but Claude's negative (*it will not be done [i.e., no harm to the Capitols]*) also works. I tentatively favor HTR's *nós farem* but mark uncertain.
3. **"stam e entenam ésser constants" vs "siam e estiam certs constants"** — Claude's reading (*we stand and intend to be constant*) and HTR's (*we are and stand certain/constant*) are both plausible. The key divergence is *entenam ésser* (intend to be) vs *estiam certs* (stand certain). Claude's version has a slightly more natural progression of thought; HTR's is somewhat redundant (*siam... estiam*). Uncertain — needs ms verification.
4. **"naturalesa e grand/puresa affecció"** — Claude read *grand* (great); HTR read *puresa* (purity). Both pair well with *naturalesa*, but *puresa d'affecció* is more

elegant. The paleographic question is whether the word starts with *gr* or *pu*.
Uncertain.

5. **"ne haguérem/commoquérem nós en turbació"** — Claude read a form of *commoure* (to move/disturb); HTR read *haguérem* (from *haver*, to have/find oneself). HTR's simpler reading *ne haguérem nós en turbació* — "on account of it [the illness] we found ourselves in turmoil" — is plausible, with *haver-se en* meaning "to find oneself in [a state]." Slightly favoring HTR but uncertain.
6. **"lo restituirà en plena sanitat / lo veurem en plena sanitat"** — Claude: *God will restore him to full health*. HTR: *we will see him in full health*. HTR then continues with *e veurem-lo y conservar longament* (and we will see him preserved long), which creates a coherent paired construction. Claude's *restituirà* is theologically standard, but HTR's *veurem... veurem-lo y conservar* has an internal parallelism that is persuasive. Uncertain.
7. **"a la sancta trinitat" vs "a la sua majestat"** — Claude read *trinitat* (Trinity); HTR read *majestat* (majesty, i.e. God's). Both are theologically appropriate. Returning to the ms, the word ending is similar for both (-*tat*). The key letters in the middle differ: *trini-* vs *majes-*. Needs verification.
8. **"retents" vs "retats"** — Both are participial forms of *retre* (to render). HTR's *retents* is more standard. Slightly favoring HTR.
9. **"dili-gentment als afers [?] per que sots aquí"** — The middle of this clause is garbled in both readings. Claude: *per e més per que sots aquí*; HTR: *seys e nucs per que sots aquí*. HTR's *seys e nucs* (six and nine?) makes no sense. Claude's *per e més* (especially) is at least syntactically possible. This passage needs archival verification. The sense is clear — attend to the affairs for which you are there — but the precise wording is uncertain.
10. **"diligència [su]perlative / puixlatina / prelativa"** — All three readings are garbled. I suspect the underlying word is *superlativa* (superlative diligence), with both Claude and HTR capturing fragments of it. Needs verification.
11. **"Ja" vs "[Item]"** — The paragraph-opening word before *sapiats*. Both are standard openers. I tentatively read *Ja* but this needs verification.
12. **"ell e nós que-s prosegueix/seguet... al nostre cor fort impreses/impreso"** — The final clause before the date. HTR's *prosegueix* (pursues/prosecutes) is more substantive than Claude's *seguet*, but the full phrase remains difficult. The sense is

that the king and queen feel the urgency of these affairs strongly. The exact verb form and the number agreement of *impreses/impreso* need verification.

13. **End notation "Get"** — Claude noted what appears to be a scribal or secretarial notation after the date. HTR does not transcribe it. If present, it may be a registering clerk's abbreviation. Needs verification.

(d) Reconciled Transcription

Incorporating the best readings from both sources, with [?] marking remaining uncertainties:

...de les inhibicio general e comissio contengudes en les dites letres no ses als trobat sino que ço que fa saber per sa letra lo dit senyor / qui daço e de les altres coses tocades en vostres letres escu al papa segons [?] vosaltres hauets fet saber · Quant es daço que desus dehets que an nos fassa res qui pogues tornar en lesio alguna / o torb dels Capitols que en hauets portats / hajats per ferm [?] que nos farem [?] / Com en aquells lo senyor Rey e nos stam [?] e entenam esser [?] constants sens tota variacio ¶ Ja [?] sapiats que diumenge prop passat apres vespres vench al senyor Rey / fort gran accident de sincopi / per lo qual perdet la paraula / e li refredaren fortment les extremitats / e vench en article de mort e tro a lhora de miga nuyt estech fortment abatut / mas ladonchs o aço algun poch per gracia de nostre senyor Deu pres millorament / en lo qual prosseda [?] tot lendema que fo diluns apres mig jorn · ¶ Et en aquella hora vench li altre fort accident per lo qual se agreuja entant que tot hom romas quasi desesperat de sa vida / e cert doppingio que ja o en la nuyt prop passada ell degues finir sos dies / de que tots los de la Cort e de la Ciutat foren greument torbats / mostrants be lur naturalesa e puresa [?] affeccio / e singularment ne haguem [?] nos en turbacio e tribulacio transcendent / com ne haguessem e hajam singulars raons · ¶ Et ladonchs lo dit senyor molt solemnement e devota combrega / e reebe lo cors de Jhesuchrist · Mas apres obrant la gracia divinal / a la qual era e es tot merit / recorregue lo dit senyor tan [?] gran millorament / lo qual de hora en hora per ara e encara continuat / que ell esta ara molt be / beneyt ne sia nostre senyor / en lo qual esperam que dins breu lo veurem [?] en plena sanitat / e veurem lo y conservar [?] longament ¶ Et notificam vos aquest fet per tal que sapiats la veritat / e que del bon millorament del senyor Rey hajats plaer e consolacio / en retents laors e gracies a la sua majestat [?] / ffahents hi oracions especials per la salut del dit senyor · Et si tro aci hauets entes diligentment als afers per e mes [?] per que sots aqui / daciavant hi entenets [?] ab diligencia superlativa [?] · donants vos hi tots ab tot esforç de guisa que breu hagen la conclusio que desijam · Et abans nos

moguessets daqui per res que oissets del estament de la persona del senyor Rey ne per altres coses / tro que los dits afers hajen deguda fi / com sien tals en que va molt al senyor Rey e a nos / e a tota la terra / e que ell e nos ques proseguex [?] com [?] al nostre cor fort impreses [?] · Dada en Barchelona sots nostre segell secret dimarts a XXX dabril · del any M CCC LXXX set ·

Ready to proceed to Stage 3 whenever you are, or if you have corrections at this point.

You said: The handwriting is pretty clear on this document so please just do a second reading of the document as you revise during Stage 3.

The handwriting is pretty clear on this document so please just do a second reading of the document as you revise during Stage 3. Please proceed to Stage 3.

4:58 PM

Claude responded: Let me take a fresh careful look at the manuscript before producing the final edition.

Reconciled manuscript readings and prepared comprehensive scholarly edition

Reconciled manuscript readings and prepared comprehensive scholarly edition

Let me take a fresh careful look at the manuscript before producing the final edition.

Pivoted to markdown format for document output

Pivoted to markdown format for document output

Now let me produce the Stage 3 edition. I'll do one more close pass on the manuscript as I write.

Acknowledged document clarity and prepared Stage 3 revision

Acknowledged document clarity and prepared Stage 3 revision

Here's the Stage 3 edition. A remarkable document — Violant acting in real time as political crisis manager, threading the needle between transparency about Joan's near-death (including the viaticum, which she can't suppress since the entire court witnessed it) and reassurance that governance continues uninterrupted. The explicit order not to leave their post "for anything you might hear" about the king's condition is particularly telling — she's anticipating the panic that news of last rites will cause and pre-empting it.

The biggest outstanding question for your next archival visit is the crux at ll. 2–3 (*escriu al papa segons vs. que-u al present poguésse*), which has quite different implications depending on which reading holds. Seeing f. 17r would also resolve the syntactic structure of the incomplete opening. Thirteen items flagged for verification overall.

Aca reg2037 f17v health bulletin 30 april 1387

Document · MD

Want to be notified when Claude responds?

I want to ask you about an unusual verb form in this letter. Violant uses the word "vench" quite a lot and I believe that this is fairly uncommon. My medieval Catalan glossary does not list "vench" as a variation of "venir" and indeed the word does not appear at all in the glossary. Can you search the web to find out information about usage of the word "vench" so that I can better understand why Violant deploys it so often in this letter and so rarely in other documents?

5:08 AM

Claude responded: That's a great question, and I think the answer has two parts — one morphological, one about genre.

Authenticated medieval verb form through chronicle sources and linguistic analysis

Authenticated medieval verb form through chronicle sources and linguistic analysis

That's a great question, and I think the answer has two parts — one morphological, one about genre.

The form itself: *vench* = 3rd person singular simple preterite of *venir*

Vench is the medieval Catalan *pretèrit perfet simple* (synthetic/simple preterite) of *venir*, formed with the "velar augment" that is characteristic of a large class of Catalan verbs. The root *ven-* takes a final velar stop /-k/, spelled *-ch* in standard fourteenth-century orthography (where final /k/ was regularly written *ch*). So *vench* = /venk/ = "he/she/it came." The modern standard form is *vingué*, where the velar augment has been expanded into a full syllable (*-gué*). The transition from the shorter *venç/vench* to the longer *vingué* was part of a broader morphological process — the velar infix appears in the forms of the preterite and subjunctive, and also in the first-person singular present, where it becomes *-c* due to final devoicing [Wiktionary](#). A recent study by Badal (2020) has traced this expansion of the velar affix across the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries specifically.

The form is well attested in the great chronicles. In the *Llibre dels fets* of Jaume I, we find constructions like «*E vench al rey l rich hom, per nom En Guillem d'Alcalà*» [ResearchGate](#). Similarly, Muntaner writes «*a mi venc en visió un prohóm vell*» [Blogger](#) — exactly the same verb form in the same syntactic pattern as Violant's letter. It also appears in the *Vocabulari de la llengua catalana medieval* of Faraudo de Saint-Germain, where a chronicle passage is quoted: «*e Alaçrach vench ab .x. cavallers de moros*» [lec](#).

If your glossary doesn't list *vench*, it's likely either organized exclusively under the infinitive *venir* (without listing the strong preterite paradigm), or it's a modern Catalan glossary where the simple preterite has largely fallen out of use, having been replaced by the periphrastic preterite (*va venir*), which is now used almost exclusively in spoken Catalan, with the simple preterite surviving only in literary or formal written registers [Wikibooks](#).

Why Violant uses it so often here but rarely elsewhere

This is really a question about genre rather than lexical preference. The vast majority of Violant's chancery output consists of mandates, commissions, concessions, credence letters, and intercession letters — documents whose operative tense is present, imperative, or future (*manam, volem, pregam, hajats per ferm que nós farem*). These document types rarely require sustained past-tense narration.

This health bulletin is generically unusual. It's essentially a narrative report — a blow-by-blow account of a medical crisis unfolding over 48 hours. That narrative structure demands repeated use of the simple preterite to mark each completed event in sequence: *vench al senyor Rey fort gran accident de sincopi... perdet la paraula... li refredaren fortment les extremitats... vench en article de mort... estech fortment abatut... pres millorament...* And then the cycle repeats with the second attack: *vench li altre fort accident... se agreujà entant que tot hom romàs quasi desesperat...* The verb *venir* specifically recurs because the narrative framework conceptualizes the illness as something that *comes upon* the king — each crisis *vench* to him, unbidden and external.

So the apparent frequency of *vench* in this letter isn't Violant deploying an unusual verb form; it's the standard literary past tense doing exactly what it should do in the one genre — crisis narration — that her correspondence almost never otherwise requires. You might want to check the CICA (*Corpus Informatitzat del Català Antic*), which contains texts from the eleventh through eighteenth centuries and allows searching by word form, author, and chronological period [UB](#), if you want to verify the frequency of *vench* vs. *vingué* in fourteenth-century chancery prose specifically.

[Claude is AI and can make mistakes. Please double-check responses.](#)